

The Sculpture of George Minne

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In his study of the artistic circles established at the turn of the century in the rural community of Laethem-St.Martin, a small town outside of Ghent, Paul Haesaerts concludes his discussion of the Belgian Symbolist artist George Minne (1866-1941) with a curious evaluation of the man's life and work. He asserts that Minne does not classify as an artist in the strict sense of the term, because Minne was not primarily impressed by the power of the expression of forms — by their subtlety or majesty[1]. Instead, Haesaerts claims that due to his meditative temperament, Minne can best be described as:

... un penseur qui cherche et parvient à traduire les résultats de ses méditations en sujets, en symboles, en lignes et en volumes... L'histoire de son oeuvre n'est pas celle d'une technique... mais bien l'histoire d'une pensée... ses recherches nous mènent dans le monde de la psychologie et de la morale, dans le domaine de l'esprit, au seuil de l'ordre métaphysique.[2]

Haesaerts differentiates between the motivation of the so-called true artist, concerned with aesthetic values and the expressive force of style and form, and the more contemplative spirit exemplified by Minne, attempting to communicate the idea of something greater and of universal meaning through form and content. Though a questionable distinction, the concept of utilizing form to create an art that would not merely be perceived as aesthetic or beautiful, but as significant on a higher level — whether spiritual, psychological, philosophic, or religious — was central to the artistic principles of the Symbolist movement, and therefore to the art of George Minne.

As sculptor and graphic artist working in Belgium in the late nineteenth century, Minne was both a product of the artistic and social milieu of his day, and a significant contributor to that milieu. The art of his first fifteen years of work shows him to have been particularly in tune with Symbolist ideas, and while certain motifs recur in his *oeuvre*, revealing what some critics have perceived as obsessive

preoccupations with them — namely those of maternity, adolescence, and religion — he was fundamentally concerned with the quintessential Symbolist notion of exploring the inner, spiritual world of the soul, and abandoning that of the material; thus his figures are depicted in states of profound self-absorption of grief, pain, or introspection. Although later in life a sincere religiosity altered the Symbolist nature of his art, the work for which he is most well-known[3] is not only Symbolist in underlying theme, but in its incorporation of certain stock Symbolist motifs as well, for example: auras of silence; long, flowing hair; double or mirror images; and mysterious landscapes. The aim of this discussion is to shed light on the meaning of Minne's sculptural work, in the hopes of re-establishing the important, if quiet, place he holds in the history of Belgian Symbolism.

Originating in France in the 1880s, Symbolism as an art movement emerged in direct connection with contemporary literary trends which had developed out of the ideas fostered years earlier by the author Charles Baudelaire[4]. The Symbolists — artists and writers alike — sought to create meaning in their work through allusion, as advocated by the renowned French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé; they attempted to elicit a response from their spectators or readers by means of suggestion rather than literal description.[5] The Symbolists rejected the realism and positivism pervading European art and culture at the time, and chose instead to infuse symbolic meaning into their art. Form was to be used as a tool to express what is essentially inexpressible, leading to the discovery of free verse by poets, and iconographic or pictorial abstraction by artists. In this context, the idea behind the work had greatest importance and was transmitted through symbols that suggested it without actually representing it. The use of allegory was necessarily rejected, because by definition it requires the application of one image or concept in place of another it is known to represent, thereby defeating the purpose of communicating by subtle inference.

The ideas that preoccupied the Symbolists were those concerned with reconciling the spiritual world

of the soul with the material world of external reality. Inevitably, with its emphasis on the subjective individual experience, the movement found various interpretations in art. These ranged from works where a mood of profound melancholy or fatalism predominated, like those of the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler, to those with obscure and rather affected compositions, like those of the Belgian artist Jean Delville, to works with strongly religious overtones, like those of the French artist Charles Filiger. For both political and social reasons, by the end of the nineteenth century the time was ripe for a Symbolist aesthetic, and its ideas spread quickly throughout Europe to Belgium, Austria, Germany and Scandinavia. In Belgium, Symbolism was associated with particular social and moral concepts that were emerging as a reaction to and against contemporary political events, and it was in this climate that Minne lived and worked.

George Minne was born in Ghent on August 30, 1866, and lived during a time of social and political transition in his homeland. After the Belgian revolution of 1830, the country emerged as a strong and independent nation for the first time in its history. It was the first country on the continent to industrialize, following the example of England, and thus advanced technologically at a faster rate than other European countries. As an expression of its independence from French and Netherlandic trends, in the late nineteenth century Belgium experienced a great flowering of the arts, with Ghent and Brussels serving as its main artistic centres. The last decades of the century were also accompanied by the emergence of strong Socialist and Anarchist movements which sought to establish universal suffrage, and better social and working conditions for the masses. These political views were promulgated within the artistic community by two important people, Edmond Picard and Octave Maus. Picard was fundamentally committed to an art that would revolutionize society, and founded the journal *L'Art Moderne* (1881) in which the latest trends and thoughts of the artistic and literary circles were discussed. Octave Maus shared Picard's political ideology, and played a key role in the history of Belgian Symbolism as secretary to the alternative Brussels art organization *Les Vingts* (*Les XX*, 1884-1893), and as founder of its successor *La Libre Esthétique* (1894-1914). The political opinions of these two men were often projected onto the Symbolist artists working in conjunction with their organizations; but while their views on Socialism and Anarchism were permeating the artistic and social fabric of the country, not all artists actively supported their goals. Minne was

among those who remained passive, and although he exhibited with *Les XX* and *La Libre Esthétique* — in fact he became a member of *Les XX* in 1891 — he worked alone and outside of the cities' populated social and political circles. His concerns were focussed on expressing his own individual thoughts through the visual arts, as was in keeping with the aims of the Symbolists. Rémy de Gourmont's description in his *Livre des Masques* of the task of the writer, was analogous to Minne's own objective in art: "La seule excuse qu'un homme ait d'écrire, c'est de s'écrire lui-même, de dévoiler aux autres la sorte de monde qui se mire en son miroir individuel; sa seule excuse est d'être original; il doit dire des choses non encore dites et les dire en une forme non encore formulée." [6]

Minne was known as a very timid man of a reclusive temperament, said to have suffered from agoraphobia. [7] He was the son of a successful architect whose ambition was to see him take over the family firm, and so in 1882 Minne enrolled in architectural studies at the Academy of Ghent. However, Minne found himself unhappy with this work and decided to switch his program to art studies two years later. This marked the beginning of what would be a long and difficult career since Minne's father, like so many fathers of artists, was firmly against his artistic endeavours and refused to support him financially. Years of hardship led Minne to become even more reticent and anti-social than he was by nature, so that he came to avoid human contact entirely, choosing instead to immerse himself in his own thoughts and feelings. By the time he retired to the community of Laethem-St. Martin at the age of thirty-three to work in peace and quiet, he refused to go to church — though a devout catholic, never visited art exhibits — including his own, and saw as few people as possible; even in his daily walks he would select obscure paths so as not to encounter another person. Although he married in 1892 and was the father of eight children, with the exception of his wife, family and closest friends, he had little contact with people.

This curious and almost misanthropic personality is reflected in the art Minne produced, an art which F.C. Legrand has described in her study *Le Symbolisme en Belgique* as one of introspection, silence and melancholy. [8] During his first two years of artistic training (1884-86), Minne explored various forms through painting, drawing, and sculpture. His work was apparently so unusual, or unconventional in an academic sense, that his instructor is said to have remarked: "L'Antechrist est dans nos murs". [9] After some of his early experiments in sculpture and paint-

ing, Minne decided to renounce the use of colour forever, favouring an emphasis on drawing and form to which he adhered throughout his career; perhaps he believed, as Odilon Redon had for some time, that colour left too little to the suggestive qualities of art. Already in his earliest works there is evidence of his interest in line, which was to become a distinctive feature of his mature style. Haesaerts claims this was a direct result of Minne's architectural studies, which is a plausible suggestion in view of the fact that silhouettes and attenuated forms predominate in Minne's figures.[10]

As previously mentioned, Minne's work dating from 1886-1900 is generally considered the purest in terms of illustrating a Symbolist aesthetic, while the work of his last forty years displays a more stylized art as well as his religious preoccupations. Lynne Pudles has suggested that the gloomy atmosphere of Ghent, which produced many melancholic artists — among them Maurice Maeterlinck, Grégoire LeRoy, and George Rodenbach, all of whom were important Symbolists — mixed with the repressive environment of the Jesuit community where he was educated, probably increased and exacerbated the already reflective aspect of Minne's character. In addition, she draws analogies between the visual art of Minne and that of his literary counterparts, especially Maeterlinck, with whom she feels he shares a "sense of melancholy, anxiety, resignation, fatality, mysticism, archaism, desperation, and despair." [11] The similarities between the work of these two men Pudles claims substantiates her suggestion that the environment of Ghent fostered pessimistic attitudes in young and impressionable adolescent minds. Undoubtedly the prevailing melancholic mood of these artists' respective works may be rooted in the environment of their childhood; however, this may also be explained by the fact that they were sensitive to the same feelings and ideas which became central to the Symbolist movement. The illustrations Minne produced for the poems and plays of Maeterlinck capture the theme and atmosphere of the writer's work at the same time as they convey the ideas of the artist.[12] Hence the sculptor of what Maeterlinck named "static statuary" was well-chosen to illustrate his so-called "static theatre", [13] for he was able to complement the texts with images that displayed his own unique interpretations of them, while communicating their basic themes; in Legrand's words, Minne held a "profound mirror" to Maeterlinck's work.[14]

His first acquaintance with Maeterlinck and his ideas clearly had an impact on Minne's art, and in particular Maeterlinck's concept of silence. Maeter-

linck believed that the arts should not deal with action but with stillness, in order to show that an inner peace may be found through contemplation that can give life meaning. Susan Canning has shown in her article "The Iconography of Silence", that Thomas Carlyle's discussion of the link between silence and symbol, where "both conceal and reveal knowledge of the infinite", affected Maeterlinck directly; it became "for this poet, along with other Symbolist writers and artists, a 'classic' motif." [15] Minne was among those for whom the notion of silence became important, since it corresponded to his personal objective to render visually the inner sensibilities of his figures. In her comments on the tremendous compatibility of Maeterlinck and Minne as professional collaborators, Legrand observed that in Minne: "... le mélange d'angoisse et de passivité mélancolique qu'exprime le poète l'habite également. C'est la même couleur d'âme." [16] So similar was the 'couleur d'âme' of these men, that Minne often identified with the characters in Maeterlinck's plays. For example, he once remarked in reference to Maeterlinck's *La Princesse Maleine*, for which he had designed the cover of the published version: "Parfois je commune si bien avec lui [Maeterlinck], qu'il me semble vraiment que c'est moi qui ait fait *La Princesse Maleine*, avec l'ébauchoir ou la plume; je ne sais plus moi-même." [17] The like-mindedness of the two artists enabled Minne to employ his own aesthetic principles in his illustrations for Maeterlinck's works; as he portrayed the author's overall theme of spiritual discontent with life yet fear of confrontation with death, he could emphasize the significance of the universal and spiritual aspects of his figures, rather than the realistic or specific. In this way he created unique pictures that had meaning in and of themselves, distinct from Maeterlinck's words.

The individuality of Minne's representations is even more pronounced in his sculptures; they are self-referential since they are not related to a literary text, and therefore are much purer statements. As sculptor, Minne worked and reworked specific motifs, and the earliest theme to emerge in his art was that of maternity, or the mother and child image. The symbiotic relationship between a mother and her offspring is presented through the theme of the mourning mother in one of Minne's first sculptures, *Mère pleurant son enfant mort* of 1886. This work is frequently compared to Egyptian figures due to its stylistic treatment of the seated pose, in addition it reveals Minne's preoccupation with rendering his figures in an extreme state of sensation or contemplation. Unlike many of his illustrations, the work is symmetrically designed and demonstrates

Minne's constant interest in line and contour. The mother is shown experiencing the tremendous grief of the death of her child, and she expresses her sorrow physically by collapsing into a contraction.

The expressive power of this piece invites the question of whether it is essentially Symbolist or Expressionist in character. André de Ridder, a Belgian art critic and contemporary of Minne, drew attention to the expressive aspect of this and others of his early works, commenting that Minne's art was: "ne point imitatif ou décoratif mais profondément expressif." [18] He called Minne's works archetypes because of the profound expressive force of his figures and the striking clarity and precision of his line. This is an appropriate description because it captures the universality of the emotions Minne's figures display. In *Mère pleurant son enfant mort*, while the expressive, even Expressionist, aspect of the work is undeniable, the Symbolist element is equally strong. The internalization of the emotional pain — that is, its transferral to the physical where the body contracts in order to cope with the profound grief — is essentially Symbolist in character. In a work of the same subject, the drawing *La Mère éplorée* of 1890, a mother is shown confronted with the reality of the death of her child. Hunched over in grief, the three figures — mother, infant, and daughter — are arranged in an asymmetrical yet rhythmic composition where the gesture of forward motion suggests a keening ritual. Here Minne convincingly portrays with cruel realism a dead infant's wan and gaunt appearance. The figures are depicted in a more overtly Symbolist posture than the *Mère pleurant son enfant mort*, since the grief-stricken mother and daughter turn into themselves both emotionally and physically to express their sorrow.

In 1890 Minne exhibited for the first time with *Les XX*, and these two works were among those he displayed. Founded in 1884 as a place where those artists who were unaccepted by the conventional salons could exhibit, and the same year as the foundation of *La Société des Indépendants* in Paris, *Les XX* was committed to the free exchange of ideas across the borders within Europe. Consisting of twenty members who exhibited regularly with the group, and an executive of four people who were responsible for the organization of their annual exhibits, which usually took place in February or March, many artists of other countries and representative of various contemporary movements, were invited to exhibit with them. Thus Realism, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, and the decorative arts were brought to the attention of the Belgian public. *Les XX*'s annual exhibition



Figure 1: *La Mère éplorée*, pencil, 39 x 29 cm., 1890.

was one of Brussels' major cultural events, for the days and nights of the weeks of its duration were filled with public lectures and performances of modern music. Altogether one hundred and twenty-six foreign artists exhibited with *Les XX* during its ten year existence, only three of whom became members: Jan Toorop in 1885, August Rodin in 1889, and Paul Signac in 1891. With *Les XX*, Brussels came to be a leading centre for European modern art, and its exhibitions had an important status within Europe's *avant-garde* circles. At its inception Symbolism was not yet a dominant movement, but by the 1890s it had become the most significant movement associated with the group.

The work of those artists who exhibited with *Les XX*, particularly that of the Symbolists, was perceived by the more traditional critics as unintelligible and immoral. In the journal *La Nation* one critic asked why contemporary artists felt "that one must be incomprehensible to the masses in order to say something new?" [19] The revolutionary aspect of Symbolist art was often linked to the socialist aims of Maus and Picard, and this resulted in resistance to the group on both political and artistic

grounds. Maus himself wrote of this situation: "*Le Salon des XX* n'est autre qu'un épisode de la grande bataille périodique des idées neuves contre la routine, bataille invariablement gagnée par celles-là contre celle-ci." [20] In an article on Symbolism in Belgium, Albert Alhadeff describes how one critic wrote that *Les XX* should place a sign at its doors warning those who enter of what would follow. He, that is the critic, postulated that the sign would read: "Follow me and meet those who gnash their teeth at the mere thought that they could be tied down by bygone rules, or ensnared in formulas of old... Seeking the new, they broach the ugly. No truth, coarseness, or vile deed shall deter them. Fearless, they dare all... Oh you who enter, abandon all hope." An obvious parody of Dante's *Inferno*, these thoughts are significant because, as Alhadeff continues:

For the average visitor, to visit *Les XX* was to visit hell on earth. Here bewildered and harried, our *bon bourgeois* — treading, as it were, on Virgil's trail — would suffer unspeakable encounters. He would be asked questions we are still asked today, questions on the nature of art. *Les XX*, in effect, were redefining the word 'beautiful'. And in its quest, as the sign had said, it would pursue all — even the ugly, the coarse, and the odious. After all, time had let it be known that yesterday's values no longer bore yesterday's authority. *Les XX*, it must be stressed, was not for everyone... to visit *Les XX* was to acknowledge the uncertain nature of art... One could no longer count on the past to clarify the present... In short, the generation of 1890 knew that things could and would not stay as they were... Thus, we must interpret their truculence before *le cercle des vingts* as a last-ditch stand to 'stop the wheel of progress'.

Recognizing the more conservative views of many contemporary art critics, it is not surprising that Minne's work was not appreciated by everyone; in fact, Maus noted that the two works Minne exhibited at *Les XX* in 1890 were described as "foetus drôlatiques". [22] Nevertheless, among Symbolist sympathizers Minne's work was positively reviewed by those who recognized the powerful expression of his art. Émile Verhaeren wrote of the spirit of *La mère éplorée*: "It is essential sorrow, sadness beyond all reasoning, anguish before any sin — in a word, the elemental human soul." [23] In *L'Art Moderne*, Grégoire LeRoy published an article in

1890 defending Minne's work and mocking the ignorance of those who disliked it. He wrote of Minne: "Son art est avant tout un art de suggestion, mais l'impression qu'il fait naître est surtout générale. Ce n'est pas l'histoire de tel ou tel sentiment, ni de tel épisode d'une vie quelconque même, non, c'est la légende de la douleur à travers les temps..." [24] In addition, a review of *Les XX*'s exhibit that year in *La Wallonie* wrote of Minne:

Cette année cependant un révolutionnaire sculpteur gantois M. George Minne, presque ignoré avant l'exposition des XX, surgit comme un talent supérieur et des plus intéressants.

Dans son oeuvre profondément étudiée, éminemment personnelle et remarquablement rendue règne une obsédante de douleur et de tristesse ou semble se révéler le but de synthétiser les formes pour en obtenir des effets absolus. M. Minne arrive par ce moyen à des oeuvres d'un très grand sentiment et d'une puissante éloquence.

Finally, even in Paris in the *Mercure de France* Pierre Olin wrote of *La mère éplorée*: "...toute la douleur maternelle, et pour la petite le désespoir inconscient d'une chose pas encore très bien comprise, sont fixés sur ce frêle papier. Certes, ceux qui affirmèrent qu'en Minne ils voyaient apparaître l'un des plus émotionnants artistes de l'époque." [26]

Thus, despite criticism from the conventional artistic circles of the day, Minne received confirmation in both France and Belgium of the uniqueness and power of his work. His exposure to *Les XX* was an important event in his career, because through the group he was able to meet other artists like himself who were exploring the limits of what they could express pictorially and sculpturally, and experienced what the general public would accept. As a result of exhibiting with them, Minne's work became known across Europe and was admired by people as far away as Gustav Klimt in Vienna, Karl Ernst Osthaus in Germany, and numerous artists and art lovers in France and elsewhere. *Les XX* offered Minne a network of contemporary *avant-garde* artists with whom he could share and exchange ideas, and feel accepted in his own right. This was crucial following the 1890 exhibit, because Minne had allowed the criticisms of his art to affect his confidence, and consequently his health and work. Seeing him in such a weakened state, his father once more asked him to give up his folly — that is, his artistic career — and join his firm as an architect. Minne accepted this offer for a brief time,

but quickly became discontent with the work and abandoned the company. In 1891 he left his family and went to Paris seeking guidance in his art from Rodin, whom he had met through *Les XX*. Having spent some time working in Brussels early in his career, Rodin maintained his Belgian ties throughout his lifetime and joined *Les XX* in 1889. After viewing a selection of photographs of Minne's works, Rodin encouraged him to ignore the criticism he had received and stay true to himself and his own vision; he advised Minne not to allow others to instruct him, but to follow his own 'voice'. On the basis of what he wrote in February, 1918 in *Les arts français* one can obtain a sense of the kind of counsel Rodin would have given Minne:

De la patience! Ne comptez pas sur l'inspiration. Elle n'existe pas. Les seules qualités de l'artiste sont: sagesse, attention, sincérité, volonté. Accomplissez votre besogne comme d'honnêtes ouvriers.

Soyez vrais, jeunes gens... L'art ne commence qu'avec la vérité intérieure. Que toutes vos formes, toutes vos couleurs, traduisent des sentiments... N'hésitez jamais à exprimer ce que vous sentez, même quand vous vous trouvez en opposition avec les idées reçues. Peut-être ne serez vous pas compris tout d'abord. Mais ne craignez pas de rester seul. Des amis viendront bientôt à vous! car ce qui est profondément vrai pour un homme l'est pour tous.[27]

Had it not been for Rodin's supportive remarks, Minne might have stopped sculpting that year. Instead he returned to Belgium to find that he, along with Paul Signac, had been elected a member of *Les XX*. Feeling more secure in himself and his aesthetic goals, he resumed his work and was married the following year.

On the completion of the illustrations that had been commissioned from him by Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, Minne moved to Brussels in 1895. He had decided at the age of thirty that he needed to improve his drawing technique, and enrolled at the Brussels Art Academy. There he studied with the artist Charles van der Stappen, who was an instructor described by his students as "intelligent et libéral".[28] Van der Stappen was associated with the Decadent movement and as such was involved with the Belgian *avant-garde*; however, he was also comfortable with classicism, and an interesting blend of the two is evident in his art. Thus Minne was taught at this time by someone with

firm classical foundations who was also open to new ideas. According to Pudles, Van der Stappen called his pupil "the sculptor of gesture".[29]

During the years of his studies in Brussels, as he re-examined his drawing ability, Minne discovered the motif of his famous kneeling adolescent. Haesaerts documents how Minne became intrigued by this form while walking in a forest, where he saw:

un adolescent élancé et rêveur de 14 ans à 15 ans. Minne est impressionné par les formes non encore entièrement développées de ce jeune garçon qui n'est plus un enfant et pas encore un homme, par la beauté frêle de cet être venu récemment à la vie et en qui se fait le travail de la maturation.[30]

Inspired by this idea of a young figure undergoing the process of maturation, in 1897 Minne created his sculpture *The Relic Bearer* — a figure of a kneeling youth carrying a square and undistinguishable block. The boy's body is long and attenuated, and his expression one of humility and introspection. Gazing downward and seemingly unfocused, the boy appears to be lost in his own thoughts and weighed down by the burden of the block he carries. Haesaerts interprets this block as a symbol for the weight of the boy's destiny,[31] and comments on the silence communicated by this figure who seems absorbed in the task he silently and solemnly fulfills. The work is exemplary of what Maeterlinck named Minne's "static statuary", and was displayed at the 1898 exhibition of *La Libre Esthétique*. This organization differed from its predecessor *Les XX*, in that in seeking to abolish all rivalries among artists it did not maintain a constant membership, but rather invited different artists to exhibit each year. Minne's works shown at the 1898 *La Libre Esthétique* salon, including *The Relic Bearer*, were well-received; Maus made particularly laudatory comments, writing: "Une vie plus réelle, plus humaine, anime à présent le muscle ou le vêtement sans que l'artiste ait rien concédé de sa vision particulière. Devant ce sûr accomplissement, le succès fut presque unanime dans le public, si hostile à naguère."[32]

Having gained acknowledgement for his distinctive style, Minne explored the motif of the kneeling figure further, and his sketchbooks are filled with various renditions of this form. In 1898 Minne sculpted his *Kneeling Youth* and began to design his famous *Fountain*. He rendered the kneeling adolescent in both bronze and marble, and once again utilized the elongated figure of a male youth to depict a posture that would convey a mood of contemplation and introspection. The folded arms and tilted head



Figure 2: *Mère Pleurant son enfant mort*, bronze, height 45.5 cm., 1886.

eloquently suggest the boy's silent meditation, and by revealing the figure absorbed in the contemplation of himself, possibly in relation to the external reality in which he lives, the work poignantly illustrates Symbolist ideas.

In his preparatory sketches for his *Fountain of Kneeling Youths*, Minne explored various poses before returning to his kneeling adolescent. In some of these, the figures hold hands and stand with one leg advanced so that they appear to move about the circumference of the circle; in others, they kneel and extend their right hand upward in a ritualistic gesture.[33] The original version of this work was completed in 1898 and at Klimt's request exhibited at the first exhibition of the Vienna Sezession that year.[34] The work consists of five identical kneeling adolescent boys in the same pose as the *Kneeling*

Youth, set equal distances apart around a central space. The work was called the "Narcissus fountain" by the Flemish poet and friend of Minne, Karel van de Woestijne,[35] and the figures have often been described as Gothic in conception because they recall the serpentine forms of the jamb figures of Gothic sculpture. Similarly, in his work *Three Holy Women* of 1896, also called *Women at the Tomb*, strong affinities to Gothic sculpture are notable, especially to the work of Claus Sluter. According to Pudles, Maeterlinck explained Minne's rather frequent depiction of these figures as an unconscious sympathy for Sluter's *Pleurants*[36], but it is difficult to determine whether in fact Minne had seen these sculptures.[37] Pudles writes of Minne's *Three Holy Women*: "Covered from head to foot, closed in posture, vision directed inward, each figure appears isolated, self-absorbed, and introverted. Despite their similarity and their proximity, each figure is distinctly alone." [38] She believes that this work exemplifies Minne's interest in portraying repeated figures, often identical in form, isolated in their own private worlds of sensation and introspection. She observes: "It seems curious that a man who was described as solitary, silent, introverted, and closed would have obsessively created figures accompanied by identical, nearly identical, or mirror images of themselves." [39] That this was an obsession for Minne may be an exaggeration, but his obvious tendency to render multiple figures is noteworthy nonetheless, and was perhaps meant to suggest a solidarity among men in this temporal and fleeting world.

In a very interesting article investigating the meaning of *The Fountain of Kneeling Youths*, Udo Kultermann explores the possible significance of the kneeling pose. Noting that in the history of art a kneeling figure can mean either adoration or subordination, he compares Minne's figures with other contemporary and similar works, including Rodin's Expressionist sculpture *The Prodigal Son* of 1889, Klimt's later painting *The Kiss* of 1911, and Beardsley's *Je te baise* from his *Salome* illustrations. Kultermann writes of a sense of fragility and vulnerability evident in each version of the kneeling pose, and is particularly intrigued by the connection between Klimt and Minne; he perceives the use of the kneeling figure in *The Kiss* as a symbol of survival, where the two figures are set at the edge of an abyss. Although he recognizes the differences between Klimt's and Minne's works, he feels an analogy exists between:

the ecstatic gesture of the kneeling figures

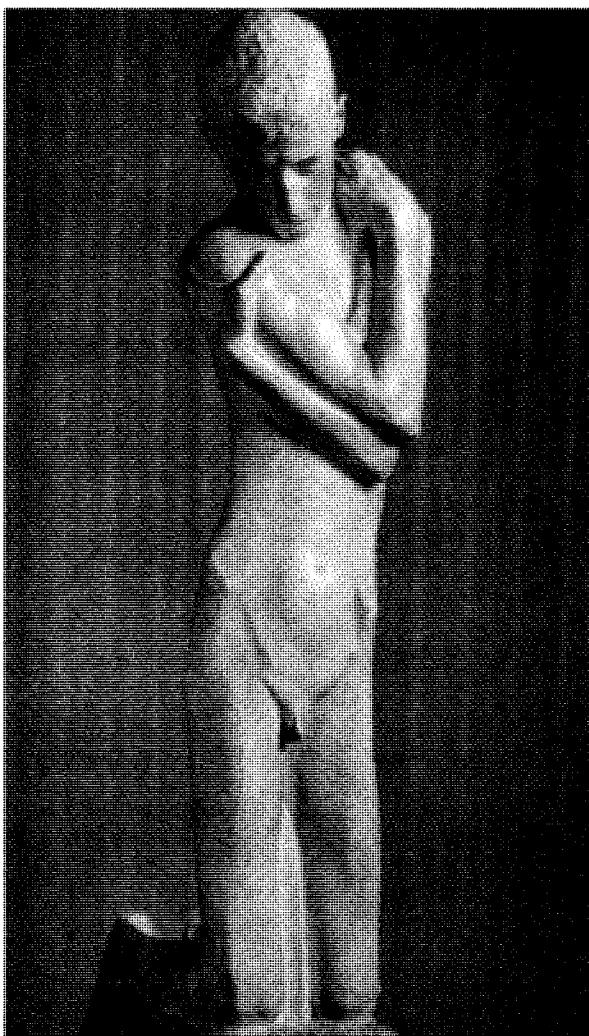


Figure 3: Kneeling youth, plaster, height 82cm., 1898.

and kneeling as an expressive visualization of inner attitudes, attitudes which have to do with the reality of the world. Klimt's and Minne's kneeling figures are both at the edge of an always present danger, the abyss of falling down into oblivion and the union of one being to other beings is seen as a means of salvation.[40]

In Kultermann's interpretation, the fountain on which all five figures are focussed is the imminent danger facing the youths, and by supporting one another with their presence they avoid succumbing to the threat of falling into the fountain, 'a pool of oblivion'. Taking this idea one step further, Kultermann concludes that the work stands as:

The symbol of youth in her dynamic comprehensiveness, the still elegiac mood

of five equally conceived bodies as the power of growth with all the frailty and vulnerability, the self-reflection and the anonymity; youth as the carefully to be experienced and carefully to be treated phase of life seen in the larger context of nature.[41]

This is an enticing interpretation of the work, and follows Haesaerts description of Minne's attraction to the young, inexperienced form of the adolescent body; despite the improbability of Kultermann's belief that these figures might melt into oblivion if they fall into the pool, his final conclusion is credible.

Other interpretations of Minne's *Fountain* stress different aspects of the work. In her analysis, Pudles emphasizes the repetition of the five identical figures as demonstrating their transcendence of time and place.[42] She compares the work to Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* of 1889, arguing that whereas in *The Fountain* the figures are self-absorbed and concerned with their own introspection, turned inward instead of outward, the *Burghers* invite the viewer into their story and experience. In relation to this idea, van de Woestijne's observation of the narcissistic implications of the work becomes applicable. Narcissus was a popular mythological figure among the Symbolists because he presented, according to Robert Schmutzler: "a paragon of self-contemplation and introversion... his self-absorption reflects their subjective, inward-turning attitude".[43] In Minne's *Fountain* all five identical figures are lost in themselves and their own private feelings. They stare into the pool of water in what may appear at first glance to be a 'Narcissistic' fashion, in that one may interpret them to be staring at their own reflections; however, unlike Narcissus, who was mesmerized by his own image, Minne's boys actually stare unattentively into the water. The contrast Pudles notes between Rodin's *Burghers* and Minne's *Fountain* is well-founded: Minne's youths are rendered so that the spiritual world within them is of more significance than the physical world of their bodies and location, while Rodin's *Burghers* display their fear and anguish to the public. It is possible that this difference in arrangement may simply be due to the fact that Rodin's work was commissioned as a public monument, but regardless, the contrast between the works remains.

In his *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* Minne's combination of the kneeling pose and the repeated figure creates a powerful statement that beautifully articulates a Symbolist notion. The replication of the same figure recalls the idea of mirror images so

prevalent in Symbolist art, which Jeffrey Howe explains may serve several functions: they may be a symbol of consciousness or of the soul, as in Goethe or Kleist; they may represent the relationship between the earthly and spiritual realities; or they may symbolize a search for self and/or self-discovery.[44] Among the many Symbolist artists who employed mirrored or multiple figures, similarities can be seen between the work of Ferdinand Hodler and Minne. Hodler had developed a theory or philosophy of Parallelism which he wanted to communicate through his art, and which he hoped would be relevant to all humanity. As Sharon Hirsch writes:

It is this notion of harmony through balance that is the basis of all of Hodler's mature work, and which offers the key to his Symbolist statements of the 1890s. To properly express this notion, Hodler developed his theory of Parallelism, a concept of art and philosophy of life based on the premise that all nature and humanity are bound by some underlying order... As Hodler explained, "Uniformity as well as diversity exists within human beings. We are different from each other, but we are even more alike. What unites us is greater and stronger than what divides us." [45]

While Hodler sought to convey a very particular philosophy through his art, Minne was never so vocal or theoretical as to describe his own work in such a philosophic context; his artistic experience was more personal and subjective. Nevertheless, in 1892 when Minne had exhibited at the first Rose-et-Croix salon in Paris, a group which was described as "de tendance idéaliste et mystique", [46] it is probable that he met Hodler and would have seen his painting *The Disappointed Souls* which was exhibited that year. The ideas Minne would have seen portrayed in Hodler's work may have encouraged Minne to explore the possibilities of multiple figures further in his own art. In *The Disappointed Souls* Hodler presents five older men seated in an outdoor landscape, weighed down by the burden of life. As Hirsch describes, the painting represents "the old man as symbol of disenchantment with life, and dejected acceptance of an inescapable death." [47] Later in 1892, Hodler began a more optimistic series of paintings based on sketches of his young son Hector, which may also have been of influence on Minne. Hodler became intrigued by the kneeling posture, and painted a series of *Adoration* pictures in which Hector was shown kneeling in a landscape. Hirsch comments that the "*Adoration* of 1892 was...

the first of a series of symbolic works utilizing Hector as the model for youth, innocence and purity", [48] which are the same themes conveyed by Minne's *Fountain*. Unlike the kneeling posture in Charles Filiger's painting *Prayer* of 1889, Hodler's figure is placed in a natural setting where his reason for praying is more apparent — he thanks God for the beauty of nature and the season of Spring. [49]

Hodler's various renditions of Hector culminated in 1893-94 in his famous painting *The Consecrated One*. Here the message communicated is the "Promise of Spring, or renewal of energy and life", [50] and an emphasis is placed on "the associations between Spring and the beginnings of spiritual fulfilment". [51] Once again, Hector may be interpreted as the symbol of youth, since his position in front of a growing tree is symbolic of nature and the season of Spring. The six angels surrounding him have spiritual and religious implications, while certain pantheistic connotations reminiscent of his painting *Communion with Infinity*, are evoked by the natural landscape in which the scene is set.

Thus the uses of symbolic repetition and the kneeling pose were not unique to Minne, but also of interest to other contemporary artists. Since it was a time of mutual influences and the free exchange of ideas promoted by groups like *Les XX*, *La Libre Esthétique*, and *Le Salon des Indépendants*, it is difficult to determine who influenced whom, but iconographic, even symbolic, similarities are undeniable in the work of many artists of this period. Robert Goldwater suggests that after visiting Rodin in 1891, Minne may have been inspired to use repeated forms by *The Three Shades* which Rodin designed from his earlier sculpture *Adam* to be placed above *The Gates of Hell*. [52] Although it is certain that Rodin exerted a significant influence on Minne's career, as has been discussed, this is yet another illustration of how difficult it is to identify what specific influences affected which artist; however, the possibility exists that the work of Hodler and Rodin may have had an impact on or even inspired Minne's designs.

To return to Minne's *Fountain of Kneeling Youths*, as already noted the five figures are set apart from the world by their pose and position, which suggest that each figure is in a state of profound introspection. The kneeling pose is ambiguous as a religious gesture of adoration or subordination, but demonstrates a sense of humility in the youths. The choice of a fountain as the subject may be significant as an inference of libation or ablution, or may signify water as the source of life, thereby conveying an idea analogous to Hodler's use of spring and nature. An aura of silence is created through the

congregated figures, and the rhythm established by their presence is accentuated in the piece by the empty space separating them. Their long, silhouetted forms reveal Minne's recurrent interest in line, which led Schmutzler, who is particularly concerned with the ornamental aspect of *The Fountain*, to remark that the work is distinctively *Art Nouveau* and probably was of influence on Jan Toorop.[53]

Regardless of the possible significance of these stylistic features, what is most interesting about this piece is that it is an individual expression of the artist that elicits subjective responses from its viewers, in keeping with Symbolist aims. The introspective quality of the figures who contemplate themselves and probably their relationship to another, spiritual reality outside the material, proves *The Fountain* to be fundamentally Symbolist in conception, with each of its features contributing to its overall affect: the adolescent figure, his introspection, his five-fold repetition, the presence of the fountain and the connotations of water, the narcissistic implications, the aura of silence, and the emphasis on line. The utilization of male adolescents in a kneeling posture can best be explained as the form which Minne believed most aptly and simply expressed the frailty and self-absorption he sought to convey. To attempt to decipher each aspect of this or any Symbolist work is to negate its actual purpose of allusion rather than description, since the aura presented and created by the work is its most significant quality.

The influence of Minne's *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* was far-reaching. In 1900 a copy of it was commissioned by the German art collector Karl Ernst Osthaus for the Folkwang Museum in Hagen. Henry van de Velde designed the interior of the museum with the intention of incorporating all aspects of the building into a general schema that would present a synthesis of the arts to the people. He believed, as Eugenia Herbert writes, that: "it was virtually immoral for an artist or craftsman to create a single piece of art, to be seen and enjoyed by a minute coterie of men... [thus] he exhibited rooms conceived and executed as harmonious units..."[54] Consequently, in this particular rendition of Minne's *Fountain* the work was shown in a setting that was meant to be harmonious with its style and composition. In this location it proved to be of influence on numerous young German artists, among them the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck.

In 1899 Minne exhibited with twenty-seven painters and two other sculptors at the Durand-Ruel gallery in Paris, and his work was favourably reviewed by André Fontainas in the *Mercur* de

France: "Les figures bronzes elancées, amincies et un peu anguleuses, révèlent l'ardeur mystique, fiévreuses et puissante."[55] Following this exhibit, having finally achieved fame and recognition within the *avant-garde* circles of Austria, France and Germany, as well as his native Belgium, Minne decided in May of that year to retire to the small community outside of Ghent, Laethem-St.Martin. Once there he became the driving spiritual force of the so-called *Premier Groupe* of artists working in the town, which very soon became an artists' colony. He began to work exclusively from nature, since he felt he had lost touch with natural forms, and executed some works in a Realist style akin to that of Constantin Meunier — a slightly older and well-respected Belgian artist who was known and admired through-out Europe, and had exhibited with *Les XX*, *La Libre Esthétique*, and *La Société Libre des Beaux-Arts*. Meunier created Realist works of the common labourer in a manner reminiscent of Millet, blending elements of the heroic or monumental with the laborious and banal. He was often cited by socialist writers like Verhaeren as the artist who rendered the plight of the common man, although his interest in subjects of factory life and life on the land never led Meunier to take part in the radical socialist movement. One of Minne's few Realist sculptures similar to Meunier's work is his *Maçon* of 1897; this figure reveals Minne's continued interest in line in its accent on the vertical, but is much heavier-set than his kneeling adolescents and other contemporarily produced sculptures.

In Laethem-St.Martin Minne came to work with Valerius de Saedeleer, Karel and Gustav van de Woestijne and Albijn van de Abeele, a group of people particularly moved by religious — and especially catholic — themes. As a result of his exposure to this circle, Minne's work after 1900 displays greater religious sentiments than Symbolist. In 1902 this *Premier Groupe* visited the historic exhibit in Bruges of *Les Primitifs Flamands*, *De van Eyck à Brueghel*, which had a profound affect on each man's art. After this experience Minne chose to return to the medium of drawing and to motifs from earlier in his career, transposing them into religious subjects. The mother and child motif was the most significant of these, becoming a *Pietà* as a religious theme, while Minne's solitary male figures became various renditions of Christ, and in particular the so-called *Eucharistic Christ*. Minne's shift in the treatment of his iconography has been explained by Pierre Baudson as an expression of Minne's "immense besoin de sécurité, de protection, d'affection qui marqua toute son existence."[56] In fact 1900-



Figure 4: *Le Maçon*, oak, height 76 cm., 1897.

1914 were years of severe personal crisis for Minne, spent doubting himself and his artistic ability. Many critics noticed this, among them André de Ridder who wrote in 1930:

De Gothique Minne devient néo-gréc... Minne recommence ses oeuvres de début, croyant, le malheureux, les corriger dans des répliques sans âme. Il s'expose ainsi au risque de détruire en nous cet admirable souvenir que nous conservons de ses premières figures de piété et de rêve.[57]

Although ardent proponents of Minne's art, like Haesaerts and Léo van Puyvelde, describe his later drawings and sculptures as dealing with modern religious preoccupations, de Ridder rightly comments on the lack of the direct and profound power of Minne's early works in these later ones. It is noteworthy, however, that the weakening of the suggestive aspects of Minne's art and his turn to Catholicism was not uncommon circa 1900, for other painters made similar transitions as the Symbolist movement lost its momentum.[58]

From 1912–1914 Minne taught at the Academy of Ghent, but with the advent of World War I the group of artists then working at Laethem-St.Martin was dispersed,[59] and Minne moved to Wales. During the years 1914–1921 he did not sculpt at all,

but spent his time drawing instead. After this long respite, in 1922 he returned to sculpture to create a series of rather stylized bathers and mother and child figures. Like his numerous religious drawings, the sculptures of this time lack the expressive and symbolic qualities of his earlier works; unfortunately, though he returned to familiar motifs, he brought no new insights to them. After the war he moved back to Laethem-St.Martin where he continued to work until his death in 1941 at the age of seventy-five.

In summary, during the first fifteen years of his artistic production while working within the three media of sculpture, drawing, and engraving, George Minne sought to convey the fundamental Symbolist idea of transcending the material world for a greater spiritual reality. By rendering figures immersed in their own introspection — whether of grief, pain, or contemplation — Minne attempted to suggest, rather than describe, the concept that through silent meditation one can attain a higher or other spirituality. His recurrent depictions of the motifs maternity, adolescence and isolation were complemented by the use of certain Symbolist elements like mystic landscapes, double or mirror images, and silence. His use of pure, clean line and elongated forms led to the description of his work as stylized, Gothic and primitive, and the iconography and stylistic treatment of his figures at times imply the influence of late Gothic and early Renaissance Northern artists. His peers also had an impact on his art, for he had a series of significant relationships during his lifetime with various artistic circles: with literary figures like Maeterlinck, LeRoy, and Verhaeren; with Symbolist artists and supporters through the groups of *Les XX* and *La Libre Esthétique*; and with the painters at Laethem-St.Martin. In his purest work produced before 1900, his figures enabled him to convey clear, direct images reflecting a Symbolist aesthetic.

Sensitive to human issues, this reflective and reclusive artist was a significant contributor to Belgian Symbolism before the movement floundered at the turn of the century. He was one of the principal artists to communicate Symbolist ideas through the medium of sculpture, and though influenced by his contemporaries Rodin and Meunier, differed from them in both style and form. In turn his work proved to be an influence on many young artists, especially Austrian and German — such as Schiele, Kollwitz, and Lehmbruck — despite the fact that until recent years he has been virtually ignored, and outside Belgium still remains relatively unknown. As Theresa Schroeder and Julius Kaplan noted in the catalogue of the exhibit of *Symbolism: Europe and*

North America at the End of the Nineteenth Century:

Minne searched throughout his career for a way to portray the sufferings of humanity in a stylized but intensely passionate form. He was deeply involved in Symbolist ideas and introduced an expression of spiritual life into sculpture that had previously been reserved for poetry and painting.[60]

This was indeed a significant contribution.

Notes:

- [1] Paul Haesaerts, *Laethem St-Martin* (Antwerp: Mercator Fonds, 1982), p. 118: "Il n'est pas quelqu'un qui, avant tout, est impressionné par le pouvoir d'expression des formes, par leur subtilité, leur arrogance, leur gratuite ou leur majesté."
- [2] Paul Haesaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
- [3] This is in fact an exaggerated description of his notoriety. Until recent years Minne had been relatively unknown, for he faded into obscurity during the 1930s, even prior to his death in 1941.
- [4] German Romanticism and the ideas of Richard Wagner, Novalis and the Schlegels, and English literary sources like Coleridge and Shelley, contributed to the emergence of Symbolism in other European countries.
- [5] Mallarmé was one of the driving forces behind the French Symbolist movement, articulating in words what the artists would attempt to convey in painting and sculpture: "Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu; le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements." Cited by Franco Russoli in "Images et langages du Symbolisme", *Le symbolisme en Europe*, Paris: Grand Palais, mai-juillet, 1976; *Exh. Cat.*, p. 17.
- [6] Rémy de Gourmont, *Le Livre des Masques*, 2ème édition, (Paris: Mercure de France, 1921), p. 13. Rémy de Gourmont, cited in translation in Eugenia Herbert's *The Artist and Social Reform in France and Belgium 1885-1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 59. "The only excuse a man has for writing is to describe himself, to unveil for others the sort of world that is reflected in his individual mirror; his only justification is to be original; he must say things not yet said and say them in a form not yet formulated."
- [7] Haesaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
- [8] F.C. Legrand, *Le Symbolisme en Belgique* (Bruxelles: Laconte, 1979), p. 260: "Son art est fait de recueillement, de silence, et de mélancholie."
- [9] Haesaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
- [10] Like Minne, Odilon Redon had begun his studies in architecture when he first moved to Paris, but while he claimed he began this work "with little faith and only to please my parents", he later wrote that: "nothing is lost in study: I think I owe much as a painter to the study I carried out as an aspiring architect, of the projections, shadows that an intelligent teacher made me do with meticulous attention applying the abstraction of theory and demonstrations on tangible bodies, and proposing to me, in problems to be resolved, special cases of shadows projected on spheres or other solids. Later on, it helped me: I could more easily bring together the probable with the improbable, and I could give a visual logic to imaginary elements that I foresaw." From *To Myself*, trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1986), p. 17; originally published, *À soi-même*, Editions Corti, 1979. Thus Haesaerts' observation that Minne's linear figures were rooted in or inspired by his architectural studies, is not unfounded.
- [11] Lynne Pudles, "The Symbolist Work of George Minne", *Art Journal*, Summer 1985, pp. 120-21.
- [12] For a thorough analysis of Minne's illustrations see Albert Alhadeff's article, "George Minne, Maeterlinck's *Fin de Siècle* Illustrator" in *Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck Annales*, Vol. 12, 1966.
- [13] Alhadeff, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- [14] Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
- [15] Susan Canning, "Iconography of Silence", *Arts Magazine*, 54: 4, December, 1979, p. 170.
- [16] Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
- [17] Alhadeff, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- [18] Andre de Ridder, "Lettre de Belgique", *Cahiers d'art*, 5:3, 1930, p. 158.
- [19] Victor Arnould, "L'Art Nouveau: Les XX", *La Nation*, February 21, 1890. Cited and translated in Alhadeff, "The Great Awakening: *Le Milieu Belge*", *op. cit.*, p. 133.
- [20] Maus as cited in Micheline Hanotelle, *Rodin et Meunier* (Paris: Le Temps, 1982), p. 53.
- [21] A.J. Wauters, "Aux XX", *La Gazette*, February 9, 1891. Cited and translated in Alhadeff, "The Great Awakening: *Le Milieu Belge*", *Arts Magazine*, 54: 4, December 1979, p. 132.
- [22] Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente Années de la lutte pour l'art*, (Bruxelles: Librairie l'Oiseau Bleu, 1926, p. 103.
- [23] Emile Verhaeren, cited in translation in *Belgian Art 1880-1914* (Brooklyn Museum, April 23 - June 29, 1980), p. 134. *Exh. Cat.* "C'est la douleur instinctive, de la tristesse en deça de tout raisonnement, de la peine avant tout fautive — en un mot, c'est l'âme humaine élémentaire que toute son oeuvre." Cited in Pierre Baudson, *Meunier et Minne* (Bruxelles: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 9 mai - 6 juli, 1969), *Exh. Cat.*, unpaginated.
- [24] Grégoire LeRoy cited in *George Minne en de Kunst rond 1900*. (Gent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 18 Sept. - 5 December), *Exh. Cat.* p. 49.
- [25] A. H. "Les Vingts", *La Wallonie*, 5: 1892, p. 132.
- [26] Pierre Olin "Les Vingts", *Mercure de France*, avril, 1891, p. 238.
- [27] August Rodin, *L'art Moderne et quelques aspects de l'art d'autrefois*, vol. 1, (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1919), p. 50.

- [28] *Le Groupe des XX et son temps*, (Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 7 février – 3 avril, 1962), *Exh. Cat.*, p. 113.
- [29] Pudles, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
- [30] Haesaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
- [31] *Ibid.*, p. 88: "le poids de sa destinée".
- [32] Maus, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- [33] For reproductions of these sketches see *George Minne en de Kunst rond 1900*, 18 Sept. – 5 Dec., 1982. Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent. *Exh. Cat.*
- [34] Klimt was then president of the Vienna secession.
- [35] Karel van de Woestijne in Pudles, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- [36] Pudles, *op. cit.*, p. 124. See Minne's illustrations for Maeterlinck's *Sœur Béatrice*, published in 1900, for other renditions of these draped figures.
- [37] Sluter was of Dutch origin but may have worked in Brussels before he moved to Dijon, where he was employed by Philip, the Duke of Burgundy. It is possible that some examples of his work were available to the public in Brussels by the end of the nineteenth century, and also that Minne may have seen some of his figures when he visited the museums in Paris. Minne's draped women particularly recall Sluter's most famous work, *Les Pleurants* from the tomb of Philip, but these remained in Dijon; unless Minne visited the museum there, he would only have been able to see them in reproduction, if at all.
- [38] Pudles, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- [40] Udo Kultermann, "The Fountain of Youth, The Folkwang Fountain by George Minne", *Konsthistorktidschrift*, XLVI, December 1977, p. 148.
- [41] Kultermann, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
- [42] Pudles, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
- [43] Robert Schmutzler, *Art Nouveau* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 12.
- [44] Jeffrey Howe, "Mirror Symbolism in the work of Fernand Khnopff", *Arts Magazine*, 53: September, 1978. pp. 116–17.
- [45] Sharon Hirsch, *Hodler's Symbolist Themes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1975), p. 3.
- [46] Hanotelle, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
- [47] Hirsh, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
- [48] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- [49] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- [50] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- [51] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- [52] Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 216.
- [53] Schmutzler, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- [54] Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
- [55] André Fontainas, "Art Moderne", *Mercure de France*, IV, 30, 1899, pp. 251–2.
- [56] Pierre Baudson, "Introduction", *Meunier et Minne*, (Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles), *exh. cat.*, not paginated.
- [57] de Ridder, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- [58] To give some examples, the French Symbolist painter Maurice Denis was particularly concerned with religious iconography, and the Dutch painter Jan Toorop also painted Catholic themes later in his career.
- [59] The *Premier Groupe* had existed from 1890–1904, and a second or *Deuxième Groupe* worked from 1905–1914.
- [60] Theresa Schroeder and Julius Kaplan, *Symbolism: Europe and North America at the End of the Nineteenth Century*, (California State College Art Gallery, San Bernardino: April 27 – June 10, 1980), *exh. cat.*, p. 39.